



Office of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic

June 2009

FACT SHEET

Refugees & Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) In Nagorno Karabakh

About **36,000 Armenian refugees** from Azerbaijan and some **71,000 internally displaced** ethnic Armenians live in the Nagorno Karabakh Republic. These refugees, along with hundreds of thousands of Armenians, were expelled from their homes in 1988-91, prior to the full-scale war in Karabakh and as part of Azerbaijan's policy of ethnic cleansing. Azerbaijan's full-scale military offensives of 1991-1994 forced tens of thousands of Armenians out of their homes in Nagorno Karabakh. In Azerbaijan, on the other hand, majority of the internally displaced come from areas east and south of Karabakh. Most of them fled their homes in 1993-1994, as a result of Azerbaijan-initiated fighting in those areas.

Background

First ethnic Armenian refugees arrived in Karabakh and Armenia following the pogroms in Sumgait in late February 1988. They were followed in subsequent years by a steady stream of refugees from Baku, Kirovabad (Ganja) and settlements throughout Azerbaijan. In 1988-89, ethnic Armenians in Azerbaijan were summarily fired from their jobs, robbed, intimidated and murdered, without consequences for perpetrators. During January 1990 pogroms in Baku, remaining Armenians were rounded up en masse and transported to Yerevan, from where they settled throughout Armenia and Karabakh. In all some 350,000 Armenians were thus expelled. Some 36,000 of them came to Nagorno Karabakh.

Starting in 1990, and growing in intensity in April 1991 during what became known as Operation Ring, Azerbaijan forced out tens of thousands of Armenians from over two dozen settlements in Dashkesan, Khanlar, Shaumian, Hadrut and Shushi Districts. During Azerbaijan's military offensives in 1992-1994, most of the population of the Mardakert District in the north of Nagorno Karabakh was similarly forced out. Some of the displaced from Azerbaijan, who resettled in the relative safety of Armenian populated settlements in and near Karabakh, were thus **displaced for the second time in just a few years**. In all some **71,000 Karabakh Armenians were thus internally displaced.**

Conclusion & Requested Action

Azerbaijan's campaign of ethnic cleansing, hatred and full-scale military attack on Nagorno Karabakh resulted in hundreds of thousands of Armenian and Azerbaijani refugees and internally displaced people. All refugees and internally displaced deserve compassion and humanitarian support, independent of their physical location. But unlike refugees and IDP in Azerbaijan and Armenia, the refugees and internally displaced persons in Karabakh have not received adequate international assistance. A limited humanitarian aid provided by the ICRC, MSF and the ongoing assistance of the Armenian Diaspora and, since 1998, the U.S. government helped address some of the needs. However, more such assistance is needed to fully address basic humanitarian needs of refugees and IDP in Nagorno Karabakh. The U.S. leadership is needed for the United Nations and other relevant organizations to find ways to support refugees and IDPs residing in Nagorno Karabakh despite Azerbaijan's continued effort to discriminate against them by opposing such international assistance.

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CHAIRMAN OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAGORNO-KARABAKH

2, February 20 st., Stepanakert, NKR

Tel: 941287, 943221, 9286674

Nb. 01-124

« 4 » July 2009 g.

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives
US Capitol, H-232
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Madam Speaker:

On behalf of the people and the National Assembly of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic, Artsakh, I am writing to congratulate you and the American people on occasion of the United States' Independence Day.

Your nation saw many ordeals on the path to independence. Outstanding persistence and patriotism allowed the American people overcome the severe challenges and become a great democracy in the world.

The formidable American spirit of freedom has motivated many nations, including Artsakh, to achieve its long-dreamed objectives of national liberation and prosperity. We defended our right to live in freedom, under the government of our own choosing, against Azerbaijan's attempt to undermine our basic right to exist.

The people of Artsakh are thankful to the American nation for the ongoing humanitarian assistance, which helps to rebuild our lives and restore our economy shattered by a devastating conflict. Further, we appreciate the ongoing U.S. efforts to promote a durable peace and stability in the South Caucasus and to bring about a fair and viable settlement to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict.

As we celebrate the spirit of freedom on this Day, I am confident that our shared values of peace and prosperity will lead to mutually beneficial, expanded and enriched relations between our two nations.

Sincerely,

Ashot Ghoulian



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МИНИСТР ИНОСТРАННЫХ ДЕЛ НАГОРНО-КАРАБАХСКОЙ РЕСПУБЛИКИ
FOREIGN MINISTER OF THE NAGORNO-KARABAKH REPUBLIC

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July 4 2009
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July 4, 2009

The Honorable Mark Steven Kirk
Co-Chairman of the Congressional Armenian Caucus
United States Congress
1030 Cannon Building
Washington, DC 20515

2009 JUL 15 PM 2:58
CONSUL REGISTRATION UNIT

Dear Congressman Kirk:

On behalf of the people and Government of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic, Artsakh, I am writing to congratulate you and the American people on occasion of the United States' Independence Day.

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Sincerely,

Georgy Petrossian



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МИНИСТР ИНОСТРАННЫХ ДЕЛ НАГОРНО - КАРАБАХСКОЙ РЕСПУБЛИКИ
FOREIGN MINISTER OF THE NAGORNO KARABAKH REPUBLIC

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July 4 2009
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July 4, 2009

The Honorable Hillary R. Clinton
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Madam Secretary,

On behalf of the people and Government of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic, Artsakh, I am writing to congratulate you and the American people on occasion of the United States' Independence Day.

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Georgy Petrossian

ARTSAKH NEWSLETTER

June 2009

Artsakh Newsletter is produced by the Office of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic in the United States covering political and economic developments in Nagorno Karabakh, Artsakh.

POLITICS

François Rochebloine, a French lawmaker who chairs the France-Armenia Friendship Group in the French Parliament visited Artsakh to meet with political leadership and get first-hand information on economic development in the republic. Mr. Rochebloine met with NKR President Bako Sahakian, National Assembly Speaker Ashot Ghouljian and also addressed the NKR legislature, expressing his **continued support to Artsakh struggle for freedom** and independence. Read more at:
<http://armradio.am/news/?part=pol&id=15146>

Baroness Caroline Cox, member of the British House of Lords, made her 67th humanitarian trip to Artsakh. Meeting with members of her delegation, President Sahakian stressed that **formal international recognition of NKR independence was a matter of time** and determined development of Artsakh's statehood along with strengthening of its democratic values is the way to achieve it. The group also visited the Foreign Ministry, several museums in Stepanakert, as well as numerous historical, cultural and archeological sites throughout Artsakh. Read more at: <http://www.president.nkr.am/en/news/meetingsWithForeignDelegations/611/>

The House Appropriations Subcommittee and then Committee responsible for U.S. foreign aid allocation voted to **increase humanitarian assistance to Nagorno Karabakh** to an unprecedented annual level of \$10 million. Both panels also maintained U.S. economic assistance to Armenia at last year's level of \$48 million and restored balance in U.S. military aid to Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Narine Aghabalian, a veteran TV journalist, was appointed **new Minister of Culture and Youth Affairs**.

BUSINESS, ECONOMY & SOCIETY

An economic forum Bridge Artsakh took place on June 19-21 in Stepanakert. Titled "**Government and Business: from Dialogue to Partnership**," the forum was organized under the auspices of the NKR President and put together by the NKR Government, the Union of Manufacturers and Businessmen (Employers) of Armenia along with "MASTER" Center for International Integration. Artsakh Investment Fund is the official partner of the Forum. More info on <http://www.aif.am/?language=english&change=news&id=9>

An unprecedented attack by Moroccan grasshoppers (agricultural pests) **threatened this year's grain harvest**. Coordinated efforts of a government-established ad-hoc committee were able to mobilize technical and human resources to effectively eliminate it.

Two young Artsakh violinists, David Hakobian and Harutyun Sargissian, **reached finals and won prizes** at an international musical contest in Fermo, Italy. They both study music at the Stepanakert's Sayat Nova musical college.

The 5th annual "Yntsa" (Gift) **pan-Armenian Song Contest** concluded in Stepanakert. Razmik Amian, a native of Artsakh, took the grand prize, while Anahit Simonian and Hripsime Hakobian took the first and second prizes correspondingly.

ARTSAKH NEWSLETTER

July 2009

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POLITICS

Foreign ministers of G8 countries (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, United Kingdom and U.S.) called for a peaceful settlement to the Nagorno Karabakh conflict and improved Armenia-Turkey relations. They welcomed the efforts of Armenia and Turkey to normalize their relations and the efforts of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs to seek a peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Read more at <http://www.asbarez.com/2009/06/29/g8-foreign-ministers-call-for-karabakh-peace-armenia-turkey-ties/>

In Yerevan, NKR President Bako Sahakian met with OSCE Chair-in-Office, Greek Foreign Minister Dora Bakoyannis. The President reiterated Artsakh's adherence to the peace process and asked Ms. Bakoyannis to use her offices to **restore full format of negotiations** that would include Nagorno Karabakh. He characterized militaristic and anti-Armenian policy of Azerbaijan as one of the obstacles to peace. Read more at: <http://www.president.nkr.am/en/news/meetingsWithForeignDelegations/650/>

President Sahakian also met with the EU Special Envoy in the South Caucasus Peter Semneby. Meeting at the NKR Permanent Representation in Armenia, they discussed a wide range of issues related to the current stage and the prospects of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict settlement. President Sahakian noted that it was impossible to achieve a resolution without **Artsakh's direct participation** in the negotiations. Read more at: <http://www.president.nkr.am/en/news/meetingsWithForeignDelegations/647/>

Armenian and Azerbaijani Ambassadors to Russia joined by a special envoy of the Russian president crossed the de-facto Azeri-NK border as part of a special OSCE monitoring of the Line of Contact to visit Nagorno Karabakh, Armenia and Azerbaijan for meetings with the three presidents. The trip follows a similar visit two years ago and is intended to stimulate **people-to-people contacts** and other confidence building measures to support the ongoing negotiations. Read more at: <http://www.president.nkr.am/en/news/meetingsWithForeignDelegations/651/>

Foreign Ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan met in Paris in the presence of the OSCE Minks Group mediators to discuss the possibility of **another presidential meeting**. As a result, the mediators agreed to visit the region later this month to work out the details. Read more at: <http://www.asbarez.com/2009/06/29/armenian-azeri-foreign-ministers-meet-in-paris-presidents-set-for-talks-in-july/>

Nagorno Karabakh conflict settlement and the Armenian-Turkish relations were the main subjects of the July 10-11 **Pan-Armenian Forum** organized in Stepanakert by ARF Dashnaktsutun. Attended by over 120 delegates from some 20 countries, the Forum adopted a resolution demanding a reassessment and a change of what was called a "flawed approach" to both the Karabakh peace talks and the efforts to achieve a rapprochement with Turkey. Read more at: <http://www.asbarez.com/2009/07/14/pan-armenian-summit-says-karabakh-self-determination-non-negotiable-demands-yerevan-break-off-turkey-negotiations/>

Responding to recent developments in the Nagorno Karabakh peace process, the NKR Foreign Ministry issued a statement stressing that "no agreement regarding the interests, fate, and future of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic can be adopted without the participation of its people and the leadership." NKR also called

The Union of Banks of Armenia held its meeting in Stepanakert. Representatives of the banking sectors of Armenia and Artsakh discussed issues of **social-economic development of Artsakh**. They also met with President Bako Sahakian. Read more at: <http://www.president.nkr.am/en/news/workingMeetings/662/>

President Sahakian accompanied by Prime Minister Ara Haroutunian visited the **airport construction site** to check the progress. First passengers are now expected to use the airport in October 2010.

NKR Department of Tourism is offering **specially-designed tour packages to Artsakh** at 70,000, 85,000 and 110,000 AMD. These will include visits to the monastic complexes of Gandzasar and Amaras, the ancient Tigranakert excavation site, the Nikol Duman museum, and places of interest in Stepanakert and Shushi.

Vladimir Kazimirov, former Special Representative of the Russian President on Nagorno Karabakh in 1992-1996 and a Minsk Group Russian Co-Chair, presented his new book in Stepanakert. Titled "**Peace to Karabakh**", the book covers the history of the conflict, Russia's mediating efforts and its leading role in achieving the May 1994 cease-fire. Published in Moscow, the book also incorporates copies of official documents on the Nagorno Karabakh conflict settlement. Read more at: <http://www.nkr.am/en/news/2009-06-25/168/>

Fourth Congress of the NKR Writers' Union reelected Vardan Hakobian as Chairman. In her welcoming remarks, NKR Minister of Culture and Youth Affairs Narine Aghabalian noted that the writers' key role in society was vividly manifested during early years of Artsakh freedom movement. She called upon the writers to also **lead in a time of peace**.

More than 600 senior high-school students from Artsakh will spend their **summer holidays at a military-sports camp** near Aygestan village that opened its doors on July 1.

About the Nagorno Karabakh Republic, Artsakh

The de-facto independent Nagorno Karabakh Republic, Artsakh, was formed in 1991 based on a declaration of its legislature and results of a subsequent popular referendum. Supported by Armenians around the world, the people of Artsakh then defended their choice in a war unleashed by Azerbaijan. NKR/Artsakh has emerged as a democratic, rule-of-law state with capable armed forces, a growing market economy, and an independent foreign policy. Artsakh continues to work towards international, formal recognition of its independence.

We would like to hear from you. Just reply to info@nkrusa.org with your comments. Thanks!

Please visit our YouTube Channel: <http://www.youtube.com/user/ArtsakhOnline>

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"Artsakh-France" art exhibit opened in Stepanakert following a trip of a French delegation that visited Artsakh to identify opportunities for developing economic, cultural and humanitarian ties. A similar art exhibit took place in Paris, France, to promote tourism and vacation opportunities in Artsakh.

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COMM/REGISTRATION UNIT

The "Russian Community of Nagorno Karabakh" NGO celebrated its 10th anniversary in Stepanakert. Members of government, including President Bako Sahakian, as well as guests from Russia, attended the event. At the event, Stepanakert Mayor's Office announced the provision of a 6,110 sq. m lot for construction of an Orthodox church in the capital.

The Washington, DC-based Americans for Artsakh (AFA) organized an event aimed at increasing awareness of Armenia and Artsakh and hosted by the Armenian Embassy. Robert Avetisian, NKR Representative to U.S., spoke about developments in Artsakh, while Sarah Ludwig, AFA's Executive Director, informed participants about the past and future projects of the organization in Artsakh. [Read more](#)

LIFE IN ARTSAKH (our new segment on people's lives and important projects)

The Baronness Cox Rehabilitation Center opened in Stepanakert in September 1998, just four years after the ceasefire agreement with Azerbaijan. Amid challenges of post-war rehabilitation, the Center provided specialized medical treatment to both war veterans and civilians with spinal cord injuries, as well as children with such disabilities as cerebral palsy, poliomyelitis, and spin bifida.

Housed in a former school building badly damaged during the war, the Center has been renovated to include ten rooms for in-patients and special rooms for sports, computer room and arts and crafts classes, including painting, woodwork, macramé and pottery. The Center is also equipped with a hydrotherapy pool. Over ten years, more than a thousand people benefited from physical therapy at the Rehabilitation Center.

Since 2008, a day care center for young children has also been functioning at the center. Along with healthy children, children with disabilities and special needs attend the day care center. In the future, the center plans to open a new department for rehabilitation and treatment of babies, finish the Center's interior renovation works, develop its sports facilities and expand home visits to include all regions of Artsakh.

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Tel: (202) 223-4330
Fax: (202) 223-4332
E-mail: info@nkrusa.org
Web site: www.nkrusa.org

PRESS RELEASE
September 3, 2009

KARABAKH CELEBRATES INDEPENDENCE DAY ANNIVERSARY Members of U.S. Congress Sent Congratulations

Washington, DC - On September 2, 2009 the people of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic, Artsakh marked eighteenth anniversary of Artsakh's Independence. In 1991, after over seventy years of discrimination and oppression, the people of Artsakh boldly and fearlessly stepped up their struggle for freedom and democracy, shaking off the shackles of subjugation.

The decision to establish a sovereign state came as a continuation of the national liberation movement that began immediately after Joseph Stalin's infamous and arbitrary decision to include Nagorno Karabakh within Soviet Azerbaijan in 1921. The NKR Declaration of Independence, formally adopted on September 2, 1991 at a joint session of local legislatures - Nagorno Karabakh Regional and Shahumian District Councils of Peoples Deputies, said in part:

"Expressing the popular will supported by a documented referendum ... striving for freedom, independence, equality and good neighborly relations ... recognizing Azerbaijan's policies of apartheid and discrimination [against its] Armenian population ... striving for restoration of good neighborly relations between Armenian and Azerbaijani peoples ... abiding by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights ... and trusting in the understanding and support of the international community ... declares [the establishment of] the Nagorno Karabakh Republic." (The full text of the document appears below.)

The Declaration of Independence allowed to provide security and prosperity of Artsakh's people and to restore historical justice. Eighteen years later, Artsakh is proud of its impressive achievements: successful defense of its freedom against Azerbaijani military aggression, restoration of its war-devastated economy, continued strengthening of its democracy and constructive partnership with the international community to bring about lasting peace and stability to the South Caucasus.

As it was said in the address of the NKR President Bako Sahakyan: "Today our country shows stable growth; almost all the branches of economy are developing, the living standards of the population are rising. The democratic system functioning in our state meets international norms and criteria. Artsakh is among the key factors of preserving stability in the region and its international recognition is only matter of time. ... There could be no doubts about the independence of Artsakh or even the slightest weakening of the republic's security. These unconditioned values are not subjects to any speculations."

Nagorno Karabakh Republic, Artsakh has successfully promoted democracy and the right to self-determination. Your continued efforts to advance these principals in the face of many challenges are admirable. We remain committed to supporting the restoration of Artsakh's war-torn economy, strengthening its democracy and creating a solid foundation for continued development and prosperity.

For the past 18 years, the Nagorno Karabakh Republic, Artsakh has firmly upheld the universal values of freedom, peace and democracy. We appreciate your ongoing contribution to regional stability and assure you of our continued dedication to Artsakh's security and development.

We have stood with you along your path to liberty and we continue to join you in the call for formal international recognition of your independence. We look forward to the day when we can join you in celebration of the flag of an independent Artsakh proudly flying in capitals all over the world

Sincerely,

Sincerely,

/signed/

Frank Pallone, Jr
Member of Congress

/signed/

Mark S. Kirk
Member of Congress

* * *

Full text of the NKR Declaration of Independence:

http://nkrusa.org/nk_conflict/declaration_independence.shtml

PROCLAMATION OF THE NAGORNO KARABAKH REPUBLIC (Adopted at a joint session of legislative bodies)

With the participation of delegates from all levels of councils in a joint session of peoples' deputies of the Nagorno Karabakh (NK) regional and Shahumian district councils, by the expression of the popular will supported by a documented referendum, and by the decision taken by the authorities of the NK autonomous region and the Shahumian district between 1988-91 concerning its freedom, independence, equal rights, and neighborly relations;

Noting specifically the Azerbaijani Republic's declaration of restoring its national independence according to its 1918-20 boundaries;

Recognizing that Azerbaijan's policies of apartheid and discrimination have created an atmosphere of hatred and intolerance toward the Republic's Armenian population, and led to armed clashes, casualties, and the deportation of Armenian civilians from peaceful villages;

Establishing itself on the basis of the current constitution and the laws of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR), which, upon the secession of a union republic from the USSR, allow the peoples of autonomous formations and coexisting ethnic groups the right to self-determination of its national-legal status;

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1334 G Street N.W., Washington, DC 20005
Tel: (202) 223-4330
Fax: (202) 223-4332
E-mail: info@nkrusa.org
Web site: www.nkrusa.org

PRESS RELEASE
October 28, 2009

MEMBERS OF US CONGRESS SUPPORT ASSISTANCE TO ARTSAKH
Reiterate the Importance of Overcoming the Consequences of War

Washington, DC – More than 30 members of the U.S. Congress co-signed a letter to the Chairs and Ranking Members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees in support for a continued U.S. financial assistance for Armenia and Nagorno Karabakh.

The letter initiated by Co-Chair of the Congressional Caucus on Armenian Issues Frank Pallone, Jr. (D-NJ) and Caucus member Frank LoBiondo (R-NJ) welcomed the House's attention to the situation in Artsakh and backed the allocation of \$10 million to address the humanitarian consequences of the 1991-1994 Azerbaijani aggression.

NKR Representative to U.S. Robert Avetisyan thanked the Caucus members for their staunch support for Artsakh. "The people and authorities of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic are grateful to the members of the American Congress for their steadfast support for Karabakh's post-war rehabilitation. We are confident that a continued U.S. assistance will allow Artsakh to overcome all the consequences of the devastating war imposed by Azerbaijan, and lead to new achievements in building a free and democratic nation", Avetisyan said.

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* * *

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opportunistic skirmishes on the Line of Contact that currently separates the Azerbaijani armed forces from the troops of the Nagorno-Karabakh Defense Army. This could lead to larger, possibly uncontrolled, clashes.

Azerbaijan's zero-sum logic was visible from the very first days of the conflict in February 1988, when Azerbaijan responded to Nagorno-Karabakh's peaceful and constitutional appeal to the Soviet leadership to reconsider its status within the USSR with the unprecedented massacre of ethnic Armenians in the Caspian city of Sumgait, hundreds of miles away from Nagorno-Karabakh.

The events in Sumgait were the continuation of policies implemented by Heydar Aliyev during his tenure as the first secretary of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan in the 1970s and early 1980s. Aliyev bragged in 2000-03 that for two decades he executed a policy of economic and demographic discrimination against Nagorno-Karabakh in a deliberate effort to force its majority-Armenian population to emigrate. As a result of Aliyev's strategy, the growth of the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh stopped, while the number of ethnic Azeris increased artificially.

Following the collapse of the USSR in late 1991, Azerbaijan advanced from pogroms to full-scale armed aggression. Reports compiled between 1991 and 1994 by the Commission for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE, later renamed OSCE) document the openly declared genocidal intentions of that military campaign.

Azerbaijan ignored four consecutive UN Security Council resolutions calling for a Karabakh cease-fire, and is therefore responsible for the continuing consequences of the war it started. Azerbaijan must appreciate the lessons of the early 1990s: all previous such attempts by Baku to use force against Nagorno-Karabakh proved infinitely more costly than the perpetrators anticipated.

Self-Determination: International Law And History Do Matter

Azerbaijan's standard approach to arguing the legitimacy of its claims on Nagorno-Karabakh is to stress the principle of the territorial integrity of states while downplaying the right of peoples to self-determination.

Although the territorial-integrity principle does apply to Azerbaijan as a general theoretical notion -- as it does to NKR, Armenia, or any other state -- it does not apply to Baku's claims on Nagorno-Karabakh. The reason is straightforward: in contrast to, say, Spain (with its potentially secessionist Basque country) or the United Kingdom (with its potentially separatist Scotland), no independent Azerbaijani state ever controlled Nagorno-Karabakh -- neither in 1918-20, nor after 1991. It was the Soviet leadership that imposed on Nagorno-Karabakh the subordinate status of an autonomous region within the Azerbaijani Soviet Socialist Republic. When the USSR began to weaken in the late 1980s, this artificial "matryoshka doll" construct collapsed immediately, with Baku losing any measure of direct power over Stepanakert three years before declaring sovereignty in 1991.

Importantly, the NKR's right to self-determination also hinges on the fact that the region has for centuries been the centerpiece of Armenian statehood. Nagorno-Karabakh -- the historic Armenian province of Artsakh -- is the only territory where the self-rule and political institutions of a compactly residing Armenian majority were maintained continuously from the fifth century to the present day, with the exception of several decades in the 18th and 19th centuries.

This commentary is the latest of several on the Nagorno-Karabakh dispute by authors supporting different parties to the conflict. RFE/RL reserves the right to run further articles on this issue

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Indeed, politically the NKR is a separate state with its own democratic traditions, and, in the long run, any serious progress towards resolving the conflict cannot take place unless its representatives return to the negotiating table and agree to share the responsibility for implementing the hoped-for peace agreement.

Azerbaijan: Oil-Backed Warmongering Will Not Work

Many analysts believe that the high oil prices of the past few years gave rise to the nationalist illusion in Baku that, by channeling millions of petrodollars into upgrading its armed forces, Azerbaijan could launch a new offensive and thus bring the NKR under its control by force. Azerbaijani presidential administration official Elnur Aslanov issued an implicit warning last month that the "leadership of Armenia must understand that it is necessary to protect its citizens from a new war" and should therefore stop helping Nagorno-Karabakh defend its hard-won freedom.

Despite the temporary euphoria created by the influx of petrodollars, and because of Azerbaijan's history of military-backed coups d'etat, the least desirable option for the country's ruling family is to start a war, during which the army could again snap out of control. But rising military expenditures and the threat to attack Nagorno-Karabakh again should still be taken seriously, because that rhetoric could inspire opportunistic skirmishes on the Line of Contact that currently separates the Azerbaijani armed forces from the troops of the Nagorno-Karabakh Defense Army. This could lead to larger, possibly uncontrolled, clashes.

Azerbaijan's zero-sum logic was visible from the very first days of the conflict in February 1988, when Azerbaijan responded to Nagorno-Karabakh's peaceful and constitutional appeal to the Soviet leadership to reconsider its status within the USSR with the unprecedented massacre of ethnic Armenians in the Caspian city of Sumgait, hundreds of miles away from Nagorno-Karabakh.

The events in Sumgait were the continuation of policies implemented by Heydar Aliyev during his tenure as the first secretary of the Communist Party of Azerbaijan in the 1970s and early 1980s. Aliyev bragged in 2000-03 that for two decades he executed a policy of economic and demographic discrimination against Nagorno-Karabakh in a deliberate effort to force its majority-Armenian population to emigrate. As a result of Aliyev's strategy, the growth of the Armenian population of Nagorno-Karabakh stopped, while the number of ethnic Azeris increased artificially.

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Conflict Resolution: The Realities And The Peace Process

Azerbaijan's and NKR's political evolution differ fundamentally. Defined by free and fair elections and a tradition of postelectoral consensual coexistence of the government and the opposition, Nagorno-Karabakh's political system is irreversibly incompatible with that of Azerbaijan. This is just one of the many reasons why any attempts to propose a political future for these two countries under the roof of one state are doomed to fail.

The negotiation process must be backed up by a commitment on the part of all three states to confidence-building measures. Bellicose rhetoric should be abandoned. And societies in all three states should start preparing for reconciliation as official talks continue. Only genuine reconciliation -- achieved through official contacts, confidence building measures and elements of second-track diplomacy -- can yield a stable peace.

The international community, for its part, should support this approach to achieve progress.

The Karabakh dispute is a difficult one to solve, but the people of Nagorno-Karabakh remain optimistic. We believe that reverting to the original format of the peace talks, with the full participation of the Nagorno-Karabakh republic, will restore the lacking balance and provide Azerbaijan with tangible incentives to act constructively. That would also credibly demonstrate Azerbaijan's readiness to co-exist peacefully with Nagorno-Karabakh, regardless of the outcome of the negotiations.

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Office of the Nagorno Karabakh Republic in the United States
1334 G Street, NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20005

Tel: (202) 223-4330
Fax: (202) 223-4332
Email: info@nkrusa.org
Web: www.nkrusa.org

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